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ABSTRACT

Requirements in Public Law 94-142 make it advisable for regular education teachers to become directly involved with special education teachers in designing and delivering appropriate instruction for mildly handicapped students. To facilitate these cooperative endeavors, the National Inservice Network (NIN) has two major components. The first component is on a national scale and links inservice education projects funded by the Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped (BEH). These links increase sharing among projects and identify resources and models that may be useful for other state and local school district efforts. The purpose of the second component is to assist state departments of education in Colorado, Indiana, and Maine in developing resource and dissemination networks for local school districts in developing, implementing, and evaluating inservice training in special education for regular educators. The NIN serves as a linking agency to state departments of education and local school districts in each state. Task forces composed of special and regular educators have been established in school districts and engage in a problem solving and planning process. Comprehensive personnel development plans are based on research on locally identified problems and needs. The NIN assists in the diffusion of model programs and effective practices in special education inservice training. Procedures for improving inservice training are based on assessments or diagnosis of needs and are similar to those in the Individualized Education Programming process: setting achievable goals, formulating and implementing action plans, and evaluating results. (JD)

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NATIONAL INSERVICE NETWORK:
AN EMERGING COLLABORATIVE EFFORT
BETWEEN GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS

Kenneth Baker

May, 1979

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NATIONAL INSERVICE NETWORK: AN EMERGING COLLABORATIVE
EFFORT BETWEEN GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS

Emerging Problems

Historically, special educators have been assigned almost sole responsibility for handicapped children. As categories of handicapped proliferated, more and more children were placed in the hands of special educators. Both the professional community and the focus of litigation heightened concern with stigmatization caused by labeling and the separation that characterized special class programs.

Prior to the passage of P.L. 94-142, special educators argued for cooperative relationships between special and general education, with general educators assuming a greater responsibility for the education of mildly handicapped students (McKenzie, Egner, Perelman, Schneider, and Garvin, 1970; Lilly, 1975; Reynolds, 1975). Cooperative relationships, however, must be based upon a clear statement of responsibility if each person is to participate effectively in the development and implementation of educational plans. Unless the regular teacher and administrator assume major responsibility and are accountable for mildly handicapped children placed in the least restrictive environment, this initiative will fail. Burrello and Sage (1979) argue for a support system that will enable teachers and students alike to profit from this collaboration. The need to prepare both general and special educators to assume new roles is a high priority if placement of handicapped students in the "Least Restrictive Environment" is to result in quality educational experiences for both handicapped and non-handicapped students.

A primary concern of educators regarding placement of handicapped

students in the least restrictive environment is, "Are regular classroom teachers equal to the task of educating the mildly handicapped?" (Brooks and Bransford, 1971, p. 259). The consensus is that few regular educators have received training that would equip them to teach students with mild handicaps (Brooks and Bransford, 1971; Gearheart and Weisham, 1976).

During the past ten years, an **increasing number** of mildly handicapped students have been returned or have remained in the regular classroom. It is evident that the passage of P.L. 94-142, requiring placement of handicapped students in the least restrictive environment, will result in an increasing emphasis on the delivery of special education services in the regular classroom. The present level of training afforded general educators is usually not equal to the demands which will be placed upon them in the collaborative development, implementation and evaluation of instruction for mildly handicapped students.

Legal Requirements

The requirements of P.L. 94-142 and the interrelated regulations of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 effect all levels of the public school system. They are meant to ensure that each responsible public agency is providing what is called a "Free Appropriate Public Education" to all handicapped children and youth.

In essence, each public school system is responsible for:

1. Finding all handicapped children and youth (Child Find).
2. Evaluating each identified student to determine the nature of his/her individual educational needs (Child Identification and Evaluation).
3. Involving the student's teacher(s) and his/her parents in the development of an individualized education program (IEP),

addressing the student's individual needs (Parent and Multi-disciplinary involvement in IEP's).

4. Providing all the services agreed to as necessary to meet the students' needs (Provision of a Continuum of Services).
5. Evaluating the extent to which the collaboratively developed and implemented plan is effective in meeting the student's identified needs.
6. Renewing the plan for each student on at least an annual basis, to address emerging needs or to be more effective in meeting the originally identified needs (Evaluation and Review of IEPs).

In addition to these specific responsibilities to individual students, each school system must make policy and procedure provisions for:

1. Due process procedures that enable parents to appeal any decision relating to their handicapped child.
2. Procedures for maintaining the confidentiality of all information collected and maintained on individual students (Confidentiality Procedures).
3. Testing and evaluation procedures which are non-discriminatory in identifying individual needs (Protection in Evaluation Procedures).
4. Placement procedures which ensure that each student is provided an educational program in a setting as close to his/her peers as is possible, given that individual's unique needs (Least Restrictive Environment Mandate).
5. Ensuring that all general and special education personnel have the training and skills that will enable them to effectively address the needs of each handicapped student

(Comprehensive System of Personnel Development).

These requirements address a full range of fiscal, administrative and instructional issues. It seems likely that public schools will have a great deal of difficulty in integrating them in ways that directly benefit both handicapped and non-handicapped youth (Safer, Morrissey, Kaufman and Lewis, 1978).

The core principles of P.L. 94-142 relate to dealing with individual differences through collaborative assessment and program development based on individual needs, while safeguarding the rights of handicapped students. The legal right of handicapped students to be placed in an educational setting as close to their non-handicapped peers as possible will make it necessary for regular classroom teachers and other general educators to become more directly involved with special educators in the design, delivery, and evaluation of instruction for handicapped students.

National Inservice Network

The National Inservice Network is a USOE-Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped (BEH) funded project which has two major components. The first is the National Component whose major function is to link together BEH funded regular education inservice projects. The purpose of this linkage is to increase sharing among projects as well as to identify resources and models that may be useful for other developing state and local school district efforts. The second is the States Component. The major function of this part of the project is to directly assist State Departments of Education in Colorado, Indiana, and Maine to develop state-based planning, resource and dissemination networks. The purpose of these state-based networks is to assist and support local school district development, implementation, and evaluation of

of inservice training in special education for regular educators.

General Goals:

The National Inservice Network has six goals that serve as the foundation of its training, technical assistance and consultation efforts.

1. Increasing SEA capacity to develop and implement comprehensive personnel development plans in special education through: Assessing needs, coordinating human and material resources, and developing a planned diffusion strategy to reach all school districts in their respective states.
2. Assisting BEH funded demonstration inservice training projects to extend their replication and adoption potential for those seeking to initiate their own efforts.
3. Identifying and convening potential adopters (local school districts).
4. Planning with potential adopters to develop their own comprehensive personnel development plans.
5. Assisting potential adopters to validate and evaluate the appropriateness of BEH-funded model projects for their own adaptation and use.
6. Pilot-testing a state-based linkage network of resources to assist local school districts in the delivery and implementation of personnel development plans.

Methods and Procedures:

The NIN uses a number of interrelated development strategies which are designed to provide the support needed by states and their school districts to increase their capacity for developing effective inservice planning and implementation efforts.

Major development strategies employed by the NIN are: temporary state and school district task forces, linkage approaches to planned improvement, and a coordinated diffusion system. Each of these strategies will be discussed below and concluded by a review of the planning/problem-solving process used by task forces to establish a local personnel development plan in special education.

A Linkage Approach:

The Linkage Model emphasizes the linking of organizations with sources of new research and development to meet identified problems and needs. The Linkage Model is a synthesis of three major change models: (1) Problem-Solving; (2) Social Interaction; and (3) Research, Development, and Diffusion (Havelock, 1971). The Linkage Model includes helping potential adopters to identify problems, training for independent problem solving and establishing communication networks among research, development, and demonstration projects and potential adopters. This process is facilitated by linking agents who contract with the client system to provide assistance in problem definition, assessment of resources, and searching for and implementing solutions to diagnosed needs.

The NIN serves as a linkage agency to State Departments of Education and school districts within each state, as shown in figure 1. The internal problem-solving process of the client is the essential starting point of the linkage model. Training, technical assistance, and consultation is provided to potential adopters in using a problem-solving process (see goals 1, 3, and 4 in above paragraph) which is then paired with the search and retrieval of information relevant to the planning/problem-solving cycle (see goals 2 and 5 in above paragraph). In effect, the NIN serves as a linkage between local school district

self-assessed needs and the wider resource network of model regular education inservice projects in special education.

Place figure #1 about here

Temporary Task Forces:

The temporary task force is a structural intervention which enables flexible and creative problem-solving. It is composed of staff selected from several formal organizational units brought together to solve a specific problem, but is dissolved when the job is finished. The temporary task force design as proposed by Luke (1972),

provides more flexibility in solving problems than is typically afforded by the traditional bureaucratic structure; it allows those who have specialized skills and resources to form a problem-solving team, apply their special abilities to the task at hand, and propose thoughtful suggestions for action.

The temporary task force design has been adapted by the NIN. State level task forces composed of interdepartmental staff are established to problem-solve and make recommendations regarding over-all state coordination and support of local school district efforts. State task forces also serve as outside teams with NIN staff to participating school districts. This role is similar to that proposed by Havelock (1973) where both people inside and outside the system collaborate to support needed development efforts.

School district or special education planning district task forces have been established. These teams include instructional and support staff as well as building-level and district-level personnel. School district task forces enter a problem-solving and planning process which results in the development of comprehensive personnel development plans after search and retrieval of information relevant to locally identified problems and needs.

Both state and school district task force teams are composed of special and general educators. This is meant to reflect and model the collaboration needed between general and special education and to ensure the representativeness of the planning teams.

Diffusion:

The NIN is taking several steps to encourage diffusion of model programs and best practices in special education inservice training. The methods and procedures used include:

1. Identifying opinion leaders and communication networks in order to create a diffusion network to speed the dissemination of information;
2. Creating "links" between model programs and potential adopters.

Both of these methods are consistent with the linkage approach described earlier, but emphasis here is on interaction. This orientation supports the view that individual adopters belong to a network of social relations which influence their adoption behavior (Havelock, 1973; Wolf, 1973). Burrello, Kaye, and Nutter (1978) report the successful application of similar communication strategies for the development of a Statewide Technical Assistance Network in Special Education in Michigan.

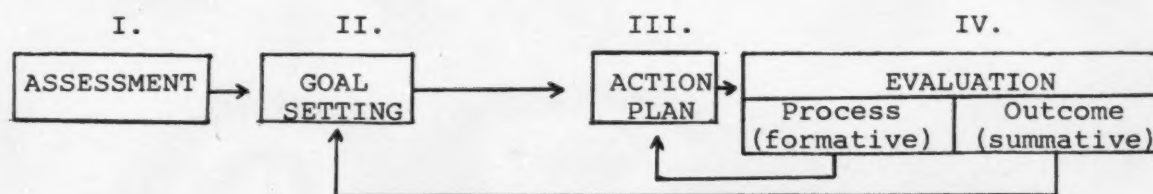
Specific activities are designed to increase awareness and knowledge of national, state, and local school district inservice models. This is accomplished primarily through training and consultation with school districts during the first year of implementation. In order to support these activities, NIN/state interdepartment teams develop diffusion plans to coordinate inter-relationships with other inservice and dissemination efforts.

Planning/Problem-Solving Process:

School district task force planning teams in each state are convened by the State Task Force/NIN team for approximately ten days of training, development and exchange of information extending over several months. Training is provided by the State Task Force to school district teams in a group planning/problem-solving process (see Diagrams 1 and 2), which will enable each team to develop local inservice plans.

Well reasoned efforts at planned improvement are based on realistic assessments or diagnosis of needs, followed by setting achievable goals, formulating and implementing action plans and evaluating results. Essentially, the planning process is a problem-solving process engaged in by groups of people seeking improvement. Planning, like problem-solving, is a process of resolving unsettled matters--a process that results in a solution to a problem. Planning and problem-solving involve changing the current state of affairs until they match the desired state of affairs. The four major stages of planning/problem-solving are presented in the diagram below.

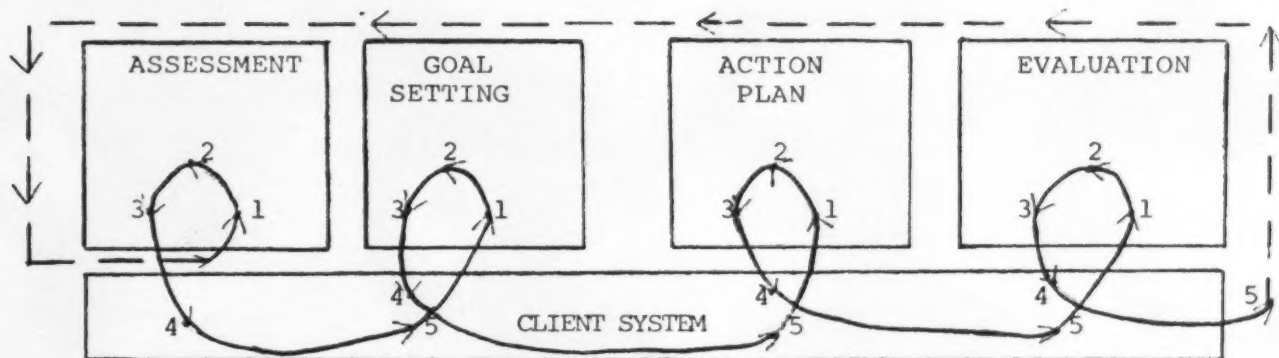
Diagram 1



This diagram is meant only as a device to show relationships between various parts of the planning/problem-solving process. The four parts and their steps do not fit together like machinery. Planning begins with assessment/diagnosis which in fact continues through-

out planning and implementation. The ongoing nature of assessment represents a cyclic process at each of the four stages and includes: 1. diagnosis, 2. design and development, 3. evaluation, 4. feed-forward results into the client system, and 5. feedback from the client system which leads to a new diagnostic effort at the next stage and so on. The following diagram represents this process.

Diagram 2



STAGE I: Assessment

Planned improvement begins with an assumption of need. People feel and express needs in various ways. Often feelings of discomfort results in needs being expressed. Needs are often caused by pressures for change, coming from outside the school system or from within it. Needs often grow out of the difference between an actual state of affairs and the desired state of affairs--in other words, a problem. Assessment is a systematic attempt to understand and clarify the present situation. The outcome of this first stage should be a definition and agreement regarding the problem or situation to be addressed in the plan, including:

- The characteristics of the problem,
- How wide-spread the problem is, and who owns or identifies with

the problem,

- What causes the problem (if important or possible to determine),
- The readiness of people to invest time and energy to meet the needs arising from the problem, and
- The readiness of the organization to recognize the problem, give it priority status, and allocate or search for resources to develop or implement solutions to the problem.

STAGE II: Goal Setting

The outcome of the assessment stage is information describing the scope of the problems and needs to be addressed. The next stage is goal setting, which involves four steps:

- Deciding what needs should be addressed

Agreement is reached as to which identified needs will be addressed directly through the plan. Decision-making at this point serves the purpose of reducing the number of problems identified in the Assessment Stage.

- Inventory and acquire relevant resources

This step may be useful at any point in the planning/ problem-solving process when additional facts, ideas, materials, etc. are needed to make a decision or to understand a situation more fully. This step is included here because it can aid in the development of realistic and achievable goals.

- Specifying the goal

This is a description of how much progress is desired towards reducing the difference between the current state of affairs and the desired state of affairs. Goal statements should be specific in nature and not too global or timeless. A goal is designed to provide overall direction and should include the following components:

WHEN the goal(s) is to be accomplished,
WHAT is going to be accomplished,
CRITERION which indicate how successful the WHAT is desired to be.

- Gaining acceptance

This step involves making the goals public and seeking feedback from any subgroups who will be affected. This public inspection of the goals and their justification should result in feedback which will assist in revising and formalizing the goals before an action plan is developed to deal with them.

STAGE III: Development and implementation of an Action Plan

The third stage in the problem-solving/planning process is to identify alternative ways to achieve the goals generated. This stage consists of three basic steps:

- Creating and/or identifying alternative solutions

Creating solutions is highly dependent on inventiveness and divergent thinking. Solutions may be suggested by the analysis of problems and needs or by the kind of resources available. In any event, the planning group should generate more than one alternative or strategy. This may be done by creating solutions and ideas through brainstorming, force-field analysis, and senectics processes. It may also be accomplished through deriving implications from research reports and analyses pertaining to the problem areas. And finally, solutions may be adapted or adopted from other similar programs.

- Choosing an alternative

After the advantages and disadvantages of several alternative strategies have been identified, the planning group selects the strategy (s) it will implement.

- Implementing a decision

Successful implementation depends heavily upon commitment of the planning group to the decisions made. At this stage in planning, the group will be concerned with:

a) Development of a concrete plan for implementation, in which the planning group will thoroughly consider each of the following:

- anticipated barriers to implementation and contingency plans
- projected costs of implementation including time, people, and material resources
- assigning responsibilities to individuals for implementing the strategy.
- necessary actions of the strategy paired with a timeline of specific target dates for each action, and
- specifying evaluation points--also on a timeline.

b) Gaining acceptance

Gaining acceptance is critical at each stage of the planning/ problem-solving process. The feedback to and involvement of people directly affected by the plan's implementation is critical at each stage of the planning process. This step will help ensure that plans made are responsive to the needs of all people involved. School administrators, teachers, students, and the community can participate in implementation through participative involvement and provision of feedback. Each subgroup should be involved in the process of designing and understanding the need for the plan, as well as have a

voice regarding the appropriateness of the strategy chosen. Such involvement can provide much needed support for successful implementation.

STAGE IV: Evaluation:

The fourth and final stage of the planning/problem-solving process is evaluating the success of the strategy that the planning group decided to implement. Both process and outcome evaluation are important, providing feedback at different stages.

Process evaluation (sometimes referred to as formative evaluation) is concerning with monitoring the implementation of the strategies. In other words, the planning group must have procedures for determining whether the strategies selected are being successfully implemented. These procedures should be directed at gaining continuous feedback from those affected by the changes to allow for continuous adaptation of the strategies being implemented. This ongoing process evaluation will provide data which can help the planning group to adapt its implementation plan to ensure continuing responsiveness to emerging problems and needs.

Outcome evaluation (sometimes referred to as summative evaluation) involves assessing or judging the consequences of implementing the strategy. The major criterion for assessing the outcome of a strategy is whether the actual state of affairs is closer to the desired state of affairs than it was before the strategy was carried out. This type of periodic review will result in information which shows the group what problems have been solved and to what extent, what problems still need solving, and what new problems have arisen. This periodic, summative evaluation should result in a reassessment of the situation, a new definition of the problem and a new planning/problem solving cycle.

The planning/problem-solving process summarized here is a generic process which can be used to identify and address a wide variety of problems by either individuals or groups. The success of a formal planning approach in dealing with problems generated by P.L. 94-142 is dependent upon the close collaboration and participation of those who are directly affected.

It should be noted that the problem-solving sequence presented here is very similar to the Individualized Education Programming (IEP) process used for handicapped students. The chart below represents the similarities between the two planning processes:

<u>I.E.P. PROCESS</u>	<u>PLANNING/PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS</u>
I. Present Performance	I. Assessment
II. Annual Goals	II. Goal Setting
III. Short-Term Instructional Objectives Special Education and Related Services to be Provided Participation in Regular Program Dates for Initiation and Duration	III. Development and Implementation of Action Plan
IV. Objective Criteria and Evaluation	IV. Evaluation
A. Process (Formative)	A. Process (Formative)
B. Annual Review (Summative)	B. Outcome (Summative)

The use of this format and its processes for involvement can provide a link between the instructional planning for individual students and Special Education Program Planning at the school building level, including the provision of inservice training. Having various inter-related groups within a system use a similar generic problem-solving and planning process offers the advantages of:

1. Providing a structure that will facilitate communication between building-based program planning and individual program planning.
2. Enabling professionals to focus attention and limited resources on collaboratively identified problems.
3. Providing a common basis for evaluation and program revision.
4. Encouraging each school to identify resources inside and outside the system which may be used for goal accomplishment.

Need For Inservice Training

The challenges in developing responsive and comprehensive special education efforts consistent with P.L. 94-142 can seem overwhelming. It is clear that, for most school districts, implementation of programs and procedures to ensure that an "appropriate education" is available for all handicapped students will require major changes in the organization and delivery of educational services.

Successful implementation of P.L. 94-142, especially those components that relate to individualized education programming, placement in the least restrictive environment and procedural safeguards, will require coordinated and intensive inservice efforts. Section 121a 380-387 of the Federal Regulations for P.L. 94-142 detail State and Local Education Agency responsibilities for developing "Comprehensive System of Personnel Development" (CSPD). The purpose of the CSPD is to arrange for inservice training programs to assist all special and general educators in implementing the provisions of the law.

Each State Education Agency has the responsibility for ensuring the opportunity for all interested groups to participate in the development, review, and annual updating of the CSPD. This state agency plan should describe procedures for the development and implementation of a CSPD which includes:

- a. The inservice training of general and special education personnel.
- b. Procedures for ensuring that all personnel are qualified.
- c. Effective procedures for acquiring and disseminating significant information derived from educational research, demonstration, and similar projects, and for adopting, where appropriate, promising educational practices and materials.

Each Local Education Agency has the responsibility for developing a Local Education Agency Application under P.L. 94-142 that must include procedures for the implementation and use of the CSPD established and described in the State's Annual Program Plan.

Implementation of the Personnel Development section will require an unprecedented collaborative effort among SEAs, LEAs, and IHEs. Meyen (1978) points to a number of factors that will hinder cooperative planning. The task looks difficult in light of the history of relationships and perceptions held about each other by the various agencies. He feels that there is a tendency for local school districts to assume they are the only participants who know what is occurring on the front lines. State Agencies are often perceived as having a regulatory image and institutions of higher education have difficulty escaping the ivory tower label. Meyen cautions that these attitudes interact to keep cooperative planning at a level which is devoid of commitment and with-

out direction. Rude (1978), in a status study of State Annual Program Plans for Inservice Training, concluded that "Personnel Development Planning in most states is incomplete and lacking comprehensiveness". This conclusion is consistent with those arrived at by Schofer and Duncan (1978) in their national status study of statewide cooperative manpower planning in special education.

Merely mandating cooperative planning and the provision of inservice training is insufficient. Improving instruction for handicapped students through inservice training will require a major investment of resources coupled with carefully planned improvement efforts. The force of law alone will not make inservice training an effective vehicle for improving the education of handicapped children. Those responsible for planning and delivering inservice training must demonstrate a sensitivity to real needs and a convincing capacity in delivering effective and efficient inservice training.

Continuing Needs and Questions in Local Inservice Planning

As was noted earlier, local education agencies are responsible for developing a local plan for making inservice training available to all general and special education personnel. These plans also must ensure that inservice programs include:

- use of incentives which ensure participation of teachers,
- involvement of local staff in determining needs and programs,
- use of innovative practices found to be effective, and
- availability of alternative professional development opportunities.

Local school districts across the country now have the legal responsibility for planning and making available inservice training in special education. For most districts this process represents their

first steps to systematically address inservice training needs in special education. There seems to be no lack of issues or concerns relating to inservice training, but there is a lack of relevant experience, hard data and proven procedures which can be effectively adopted.

School districts are in part dependent upon the effectiveness of their State Agencies in acquiring and coordinating resources needed to support local efforts. Below is a representative list of problems facing school districts in planning for inservice training.

- How is inservice training in special education related to other inservice training?
- How will inservice training be defined?
- How will the necessary participation in planning be gained?
- How will inservice needs be determined?
- What forms of inservice delivery are possible?
- How will the content for inservice be determined?
- How will inservice training be evaluated?
- How will local staff be used?
- How are principals involved in building-based inservice?
- How can inservice training be individualized?
- How will inservice efforts be financed?
- What incentives will be provided?
- Who will provide inservice?
- How will acceptance for and participation in the inservice training be gained?
- How will transfer of training be supported?
- How will teacher collective bargaining issues be dealt with?

The problems facing the developing inservice efforts can be addressed and hopefully solved through coordinated state planning and support combined with well considered local efforts at providing effective inservice programs.

Resolution of the problems encountered in developing more normalized programs for handicapped children will require the commitment and participation of both general and special educators.

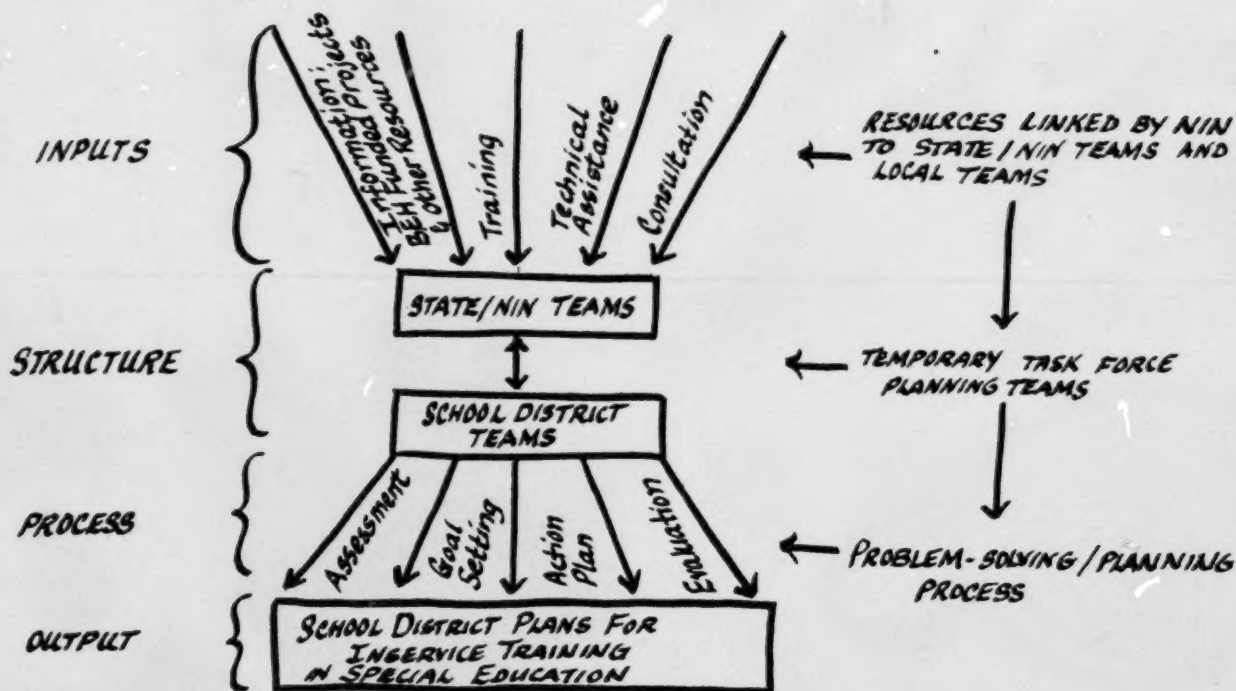


Figure #1: National Inservice Network's linkage approach to planned improvement through collaborative development, implementation, and evaluation of inservice training programs in special education.

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